

Theme III: Advocacy/Positioning Area Studies Librarians and Collections

Changes in academic publishing and research, together with growing interest to promote global competencies in North American universities, have led to reviews of library organizational structures seeking to align area studies collections and services with these trends. In some cases, new area studies departments have emerged as distinct organizational units in research libraries. In other cases, such units have existed for quite some time. There is a growing recognition that area specialists share similar issues and challenges which demand more encompassing approaches. Since this is a recent development, these area studies units are still trying to find a common voice and strive to position themselves within their institutions, as well as at the national and international levels.

In light of this scenario and based on your own work and experience, please consider this set of issues in your reply to the provocation:

- How can area and international studies librarians demonstrate the value and impact of their collections and services – within their libraries, but also at the campus level, as well as nationally and internationally? Are conventional measurements (such as budget allocation, collection size, and circulation figures) still adequate standards for assessing library value and impact? Is there a need to develop alternative measurements to gauge the impact of area and international studies library services and collections on institutional goals, student learning, and faculty achievement?
- As libraries respond to changes in the academy, publishing, and the information landscape, how can we position area and international studies collections and services as central to the educational mission of the university? How can we best communicate the values and contributions of the library to diverse constituencies on campus and beyond? Is the time ripe for introducing strategic planning for area and international studies collections and services?
- The current focus on globalization in North American universities promotes an education based on a broad understanding of societies around the world through the study of foreign languages and the acquisition of area-based knowledge. What does this mean for area and international collections and services in research libraries? If greater demand for international resources is anticipated, how can we advocate for continued support for collections and services that adequately support the teaching and research mission of the globalized campuses?